







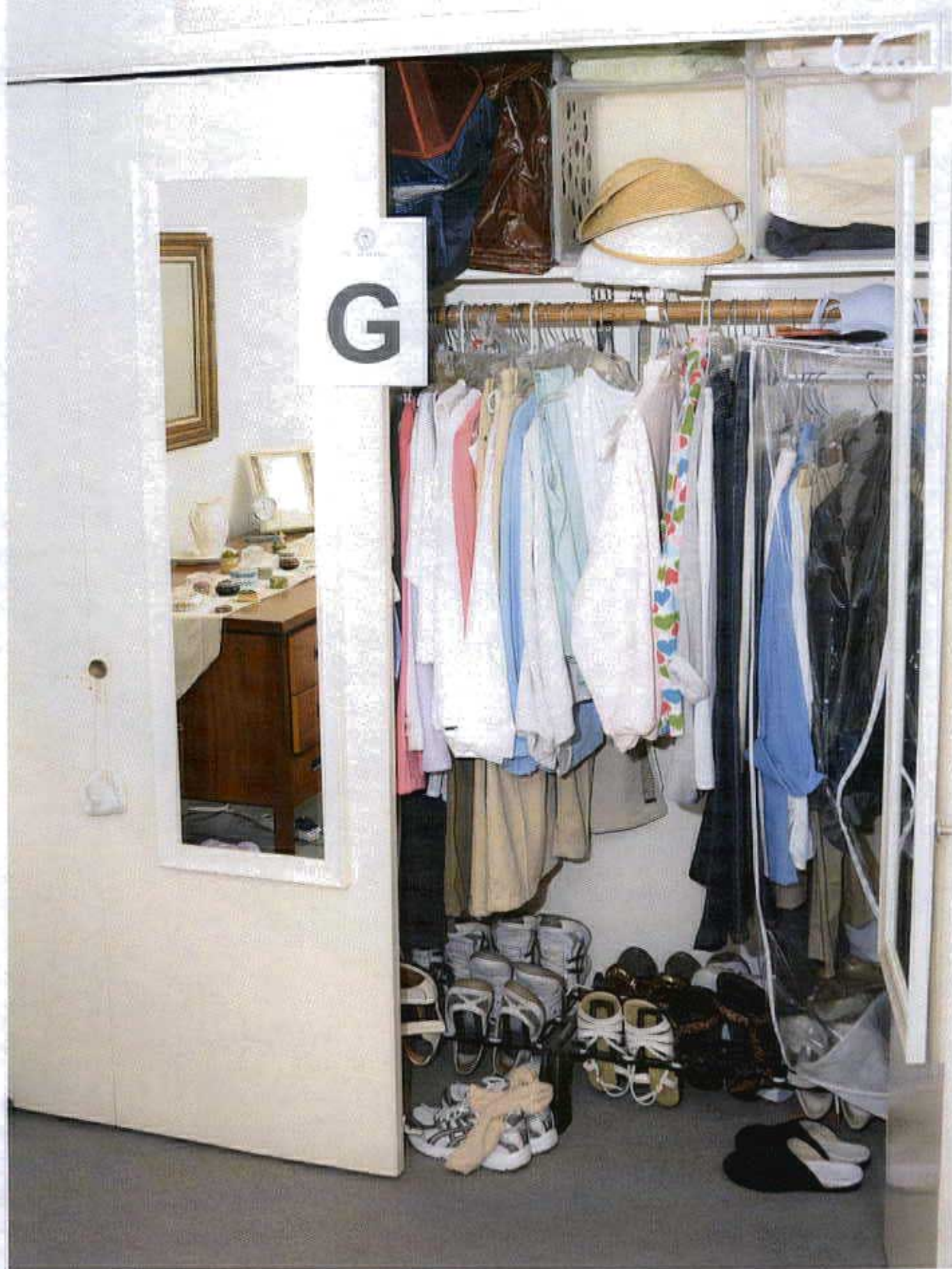
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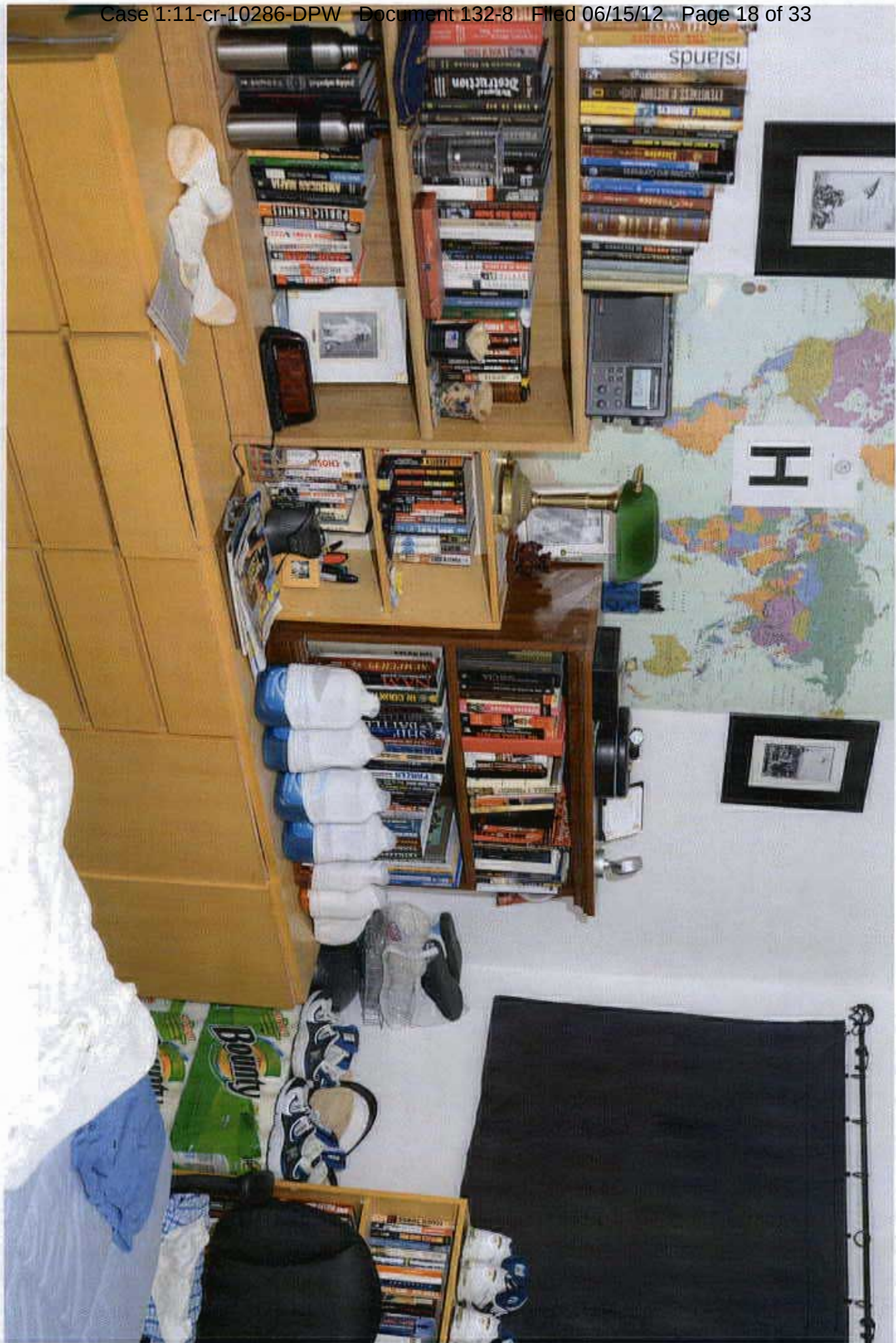








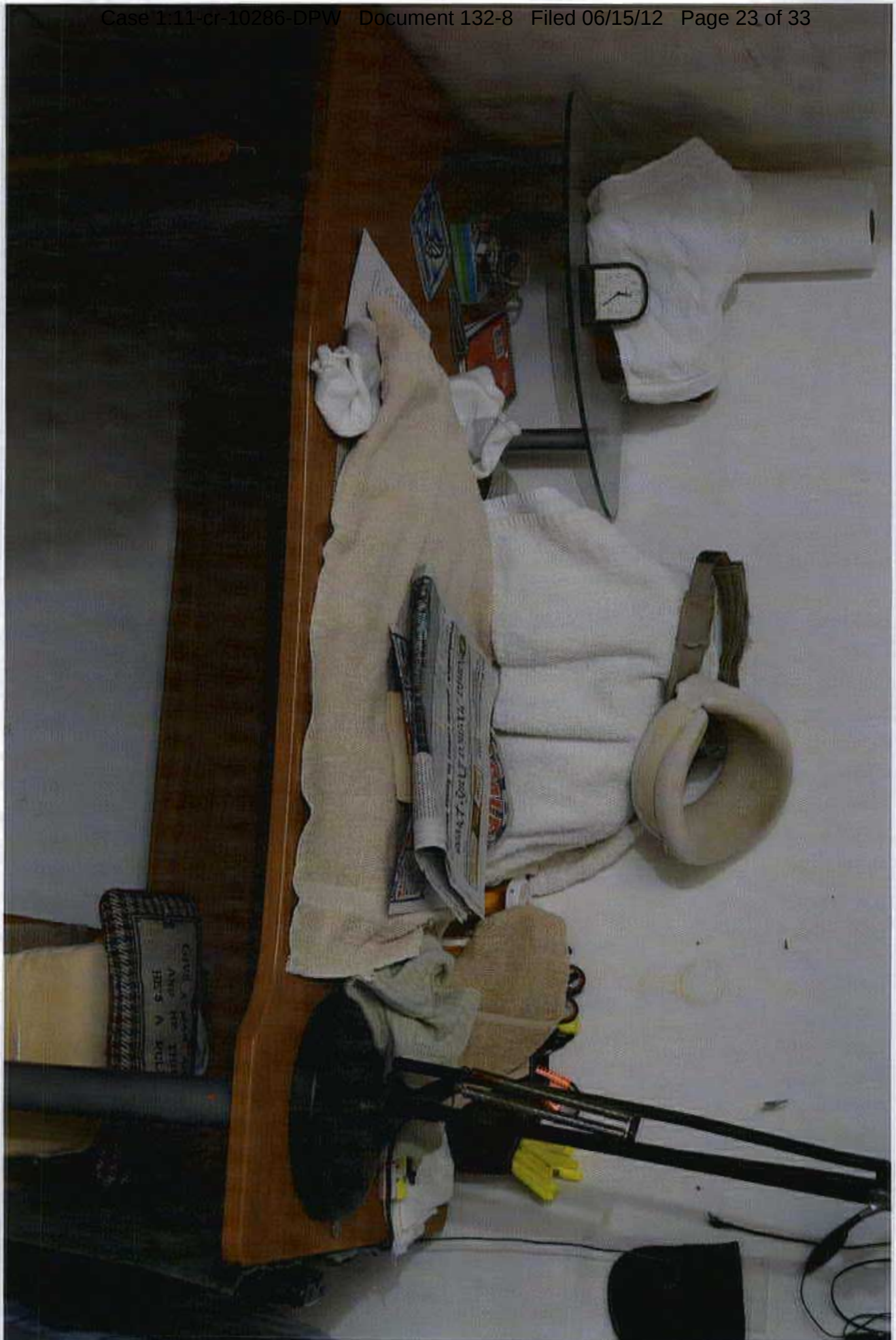




















Co

Long Beach's David Garcia took special care of the neediest on his beat, even as he battled cancer.

Mike Pohl

Long Beach Police Officer David A. Garcia (retired) passed his message on one of his first days on the force.

It was 1986, and Garcia was a probationary officer under the supervision of a field training officer.

"Pull over the car," Garcia told the other policeman during a patrol.

When the cruiser stopped, Garcia jumped out and ran to an injured person who was struggling at the side of the road. Placing the injured person in a box, he directed the training officer to drive to a veterinarian's office.

Other Long Beach police officers say that's the way Garcia was until the very end, when he succumbed Feb. 7 to a long battle with cancer.

The 41-year-old officer would begin every night shift on the city's north side by walking yet tied from the back of his car and piling it into the trunk of his police vehicle.

As he patrolled Long Beach's darkest streets, Garcia watched for homeless people with dogs. If the street person's pet was friendly, Garcia would pull a few cans of dog food from the trunk and shove the meat there would be more if needed.

"He'd stop and bring out the dog's name and what kind of care it was getting. He paid for two rollers and for their dog to go to proms," said Officer Keith Mortenson, who worked with Garcia for 15 years.

In the meantime, Garcia was a lot more than the



FAMILY: David A. Garcia with his wife Melissa, and newborn daughter Aydan. Garcia, 44, died Feb. 7.



CARING: Garcia was particularly known for helping homeless people care for their pets.

was in the car," Mortenson said. "But he'd say, 'Animals need help. He didn't want anything but to help them.'"

Garcia regularly let bowls of water and dog food for homeless living in various city parks and in the police station parking lot. As a result, police cars always had long lines of dogs waiting.

"Working graveyard, you

often find animals hitting cars in the dark. Dave would always make sure that animal control got there in a timely manner. If they were late, he'd get in the radio and tell them to hurry up," said Officer Mario Talaris, a friend for two decades.

"One homeless man Dave befriended has a dog named Sasha, and occasionally he gets picked up because of domestic violations. Dave would make certain that Sasha was taken care of when his owner was in jail, so he arranged for a lady in a trailer park to take care of the dog in those situations," Talaris said.

"Dave thought a tag with the dog's name and phone number on it was Sasha. He would pay for her to take Sasha to the groomer's and pay for her hair done and wax."

Garcia regularly let homeless people and homeless people of churches on an elderly Long Beach woman who walked her dog between midnight and 1 a.m. every night.

Garcia was honored by Long Beach officials in

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